



FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

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For Immediate Release

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Bay Watershed Grant Funds Invasive Plant Fight

Officials from the Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grant Program awarded the Fairfax County Park Authority \$50,000 to continue its Invasive Management Species (IMA) program last week. The announcement helps draw attention to the year-old Park Authority and volunteer partnership which strives to control fast-growing plants like English ivy and kudzu in increasingly urbanized Fairfax County.

Invasive plant species grow quickly, taking over yards, gardens and forests. They are difficult to remove and control. They reduce the biological diversity of natural areas by aggressively out-competing native plants, thus reducing the quality of wildlife habitat and wildlife populations themselves. IMA volunteers remove unwanted plants by hand and plant native species in their place.

Over two-years, the IMA program will train 40 volunteer leaders in invasive species and forest management, who will in turn lead and educate approximately 6,000 volunteers in forest restoration projects at 30-40 sites throughout the county. A target of 20 acres of urban forests will be restored by this three-pronged assault which includes invasive plant species removal, native vegetation planting and education of what not to plant in our urban backyards.

The initial funding for the IMA program was provided by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. Contributing project partners include Earth Sangha, the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District, and several neighborhood organizations. The Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants Program promotes community-based efforts to develop and implement conservation strategies to protect and restore the diverse natural resources of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. In 2006, the program is awarding over \$2.6 million to 68 projects.

This year's grants will protect or manage approximately 2,600 acres of critical fish and wildlife habitat, including wetlands, oyster reefs and underwater grasses. Grant recipients will plant more than five miles of forest buffers and restore an additional 21 miles of streams. Approximately 10,000 volunteers will participate in the projects, while 47,000 citizens will be educated through outreach materials.

The Small Watershed Grant Program is administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and is authorized under the Clean Water Act and the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Act. Primary funding is by the USDA Forest Service, The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In September, volunteers will be working at Lake Accotink in Springfield, Lake Fairfax in Reston and at Woodglenn Lake in Fairfax Station. For more information on IMA sites or volunteering call the Resource Management Division at 703-324-8674. www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resources/nrp-ima.htm

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